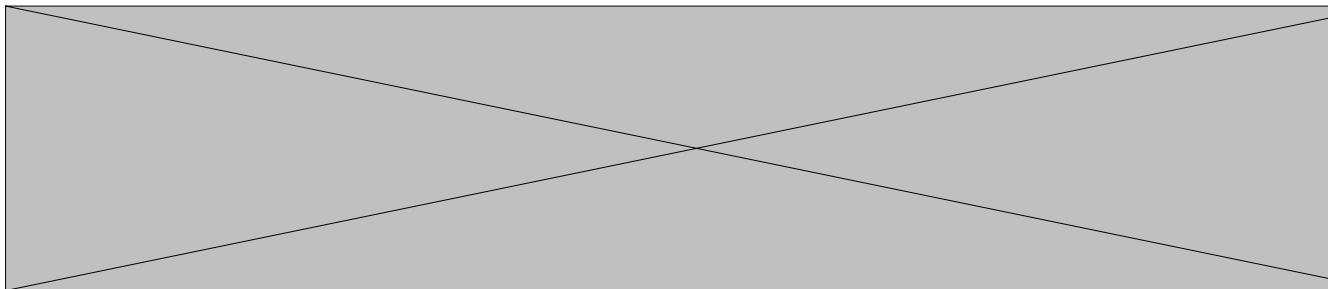


To: sfoss@blm.gov[sfoss@blm.gov]
From: SVP
Sent: 2017-05-23T11:36:04-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Protect Vertebrate Paleontology at Bears Ears National Monument
Received: 2017-05-23T12:03:04-04:00



19 May 2017

Subject: Protect Vertebrate Paleontology at Bears Ears National Monument

Dear SVP Members,

Part of the core mission of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology is to support and encourage the protection of vertebrate fossils and fossil sites. President Trump has called for review of 21 US National Monuments, including two that were designated in large part because of their vertebrate fossil resources: **Bears Ears and Grand-Staircase Escalante National Monuments**.

We encourage SVP members to tell the Department of Interior to protect vertebrate paleontology by **maintaining the Monuments' existing boundaries and extending them to include all of the Red Canyon Area at Bears Ears**.

Comment submission form: https://www.regulations.gov/document?D_DOI-2017-0002-0001

Deadline for comments on Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante is **May 26**; other monuments **July 10**.

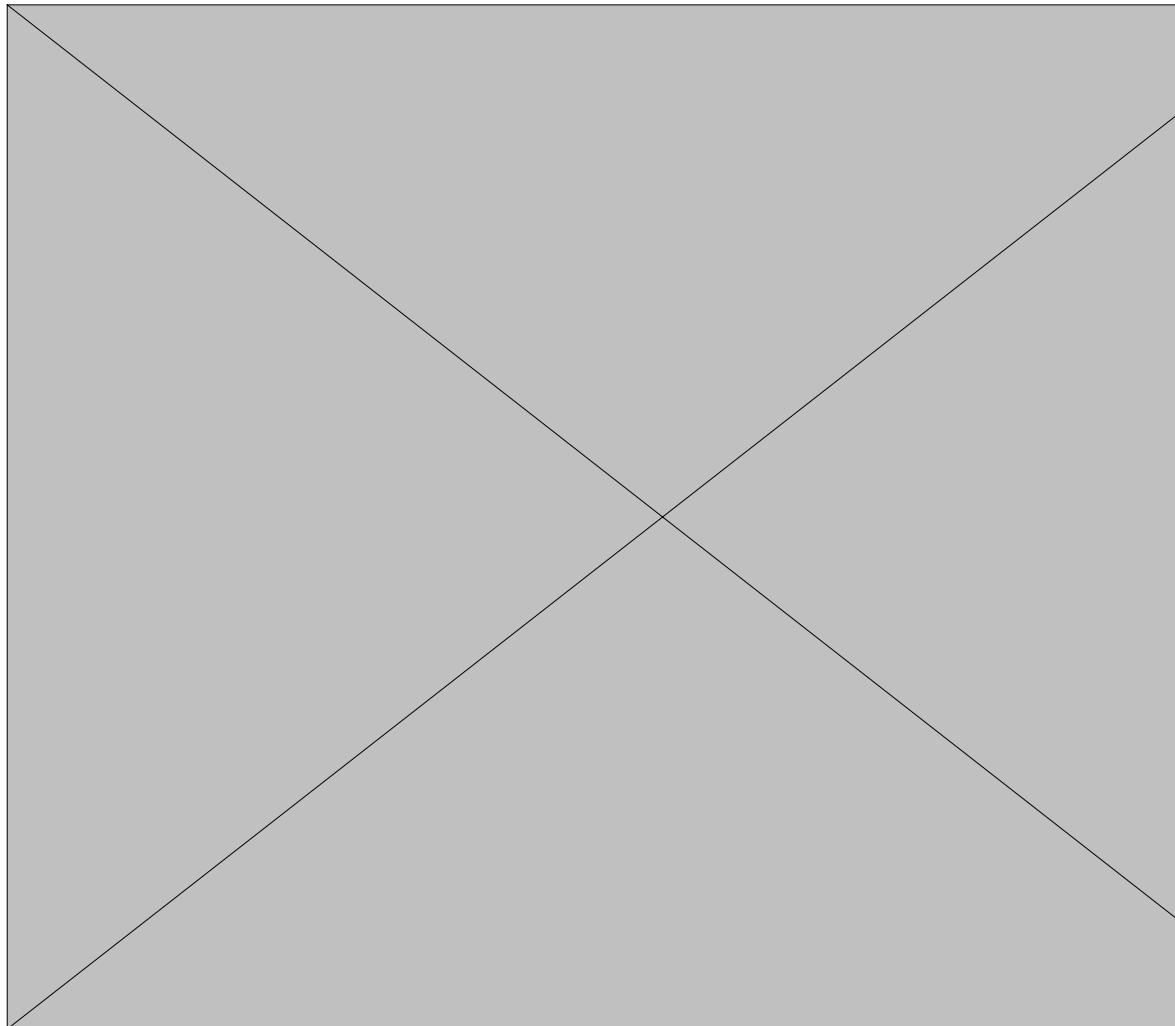
Bears Ears National Monument

Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah was established only last year. SVP and many of its members advocated for this protection because of its rich Paleozoic and Mesozoic vertebrate record. One of the primary criteria for establishing National Monuments is to protect "objects of scientific interest" and one of the primary goals of Bears Ears was to protect paleontological and archaeological resources. All of its areas contain world class vertebrate fossil localities spanning the Pennsylvanian through the Cretaceous, many of them only just beginning to be prospected. Many of the fossils from Bears Ears are only examples of their kind in the country or the world, including new species of extinct fish, amphibians, mammal-relatives, and reptiles. Designation of the monument was a major accomplishment for our science and we do not want to lose it.

Here are points that you can make in your comments about the Bears Ears National Monument. Please mention all areas of the Monument to make the case that the boundaries should not be reduced:

- The central Dark Canyon, Bears Ears Buttes and Cedar Mesa region contains scientifically invaluable Pennsylvanian and Permian communities that document the history of terrestrial vertebrate life prior to the Permian-Triassic extinction. The area includes spectacular synapsid remains and strange burrows from these early mammal relatives that are still poorly understood.
- The Valley of the Gods area includes some of the earliest vertebrates to walk on land in America, as well as exquisitely preserved leaf fossils and petrified wood.

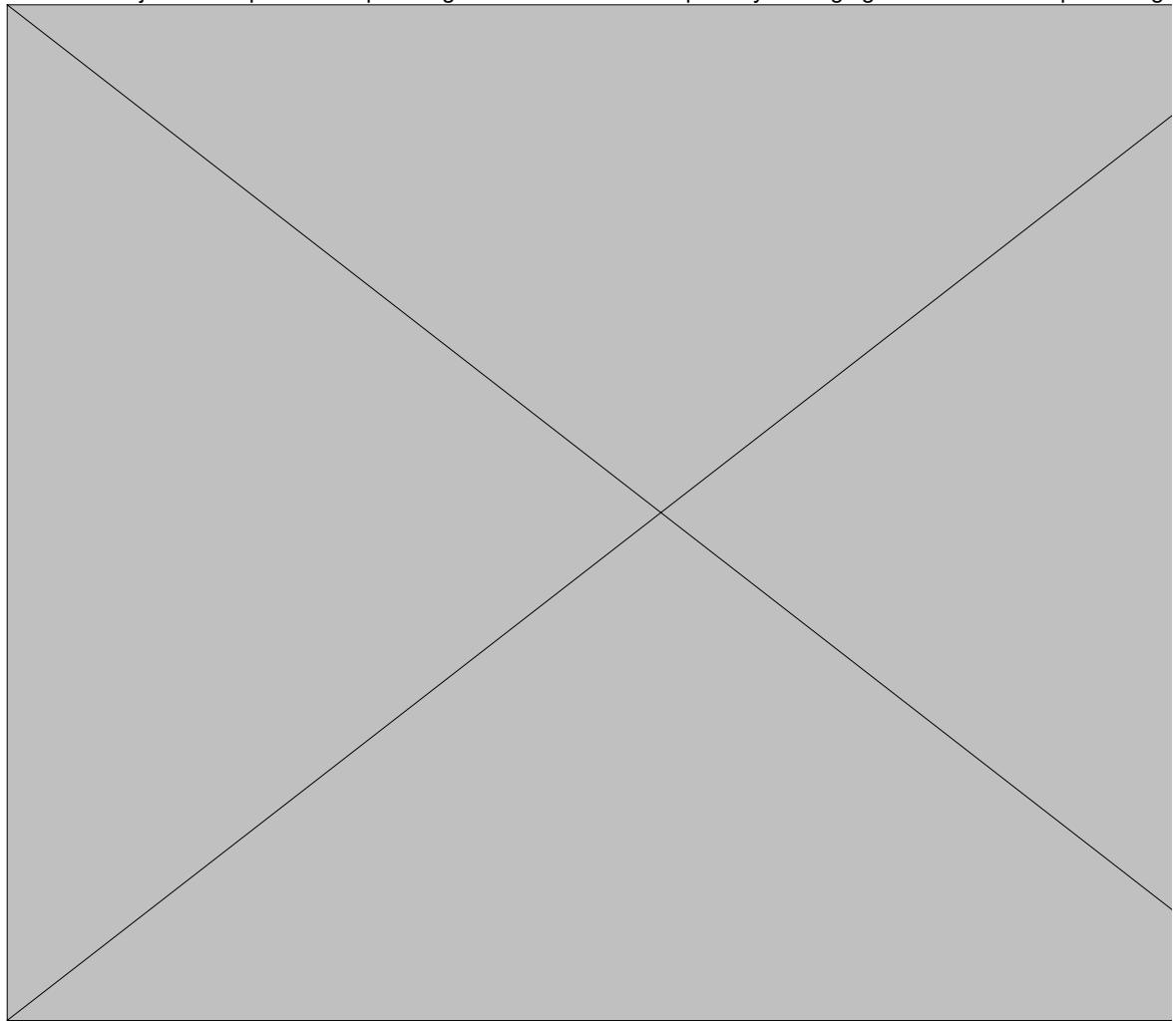
- Fossil evidence exposed along the Honaker Trail provides evidence that this arid landscape was once part of a thriving coral reef during the Pennsylvanian Period.
- The Red Canyon Region preserves one of the best records of the Triassic-Jurassic transition anywhere in the world, providing crucial information for paleontologists seeking to understand how dinosaurs came to dominate terrestrial ecosystems during the Mesozoic Era. This area has only just begun to be prospected and already it has produced an incredible range of vertebrate life, including enigmatic animals like the armored *Doswellia*.
- Only parts of the Red Canyon Region are currently protected within the boundaries of the Monument. Please ask Secretary Zinke to expand the boundaries to include the area between the western "island" and the main part of the Monument.
- The Indian Creek Region documents the ecology of large carnivorous mastodontosauroids in the Moenkopi Fm., and the geologically younger Chinle Fm. has produced fossil plants, crayfish and burrows, and extinct amphibians and reptiles, such as metoposaurs, phytosaurs, crocodylomorphs, and dinosaurs. Sites in this area were looted before the Monument was established.
- The Eastern Region of the Monument has a unique record of Jurassic and Cretaceous vertebrate life, including many new dinosaur taxa like the prosauropod *Seitaad*.



Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was established in 1996. Like with Bears Ears, one of the major reasons for

protecting the area was for its vertebrate paleontological resources. The Kaiparowits Plateau in particular has produced one of the most important records anywhere in the world of the entire Late Cretaceous. It is the Kaiparowits area in particular that is under threat by the Trump administration because the sequence of deposits there includes a series of transgressions and regressions with major coal deposits. Strip mining this area would be especially damaging to the vertebrate producing layers.



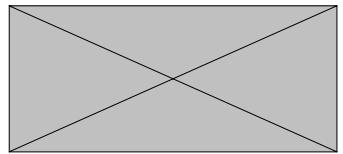
Here are points you can make about Grand Staircase-Escalante. Like with Bears Ears, please mention all areas of the Monument in order to make the case that its boundaries must be maintained to protect scientific investigation of this important area.

- The Grand Staircase Region on the western side of the monument has yielded spectacular trackways, including unusual ones like *Brasilichnium*, which is likely to have been produced by Mesozoic synapsids. Extensive collections of fossils have been recovered from the Chinle, Moenave, Kayenta, and Navajo Fms, many of them still under study, including fish and petrified forest.
- The Kaiparowits Plateau Region is the most spectacular part of the Monument from the perspective of vertebrate paleontology. It provides one of the most complete records of the Late Cretaceous anywhere in the world. More than 2,000 new vertebrate localities have been documented in this area alone since the monument was established, and only about 20% of it has been inventoried. Many new taxa have been described from this area, including mammals, dinosaurs, lizards and snakes, turtles, crocodyliforms, elasmobranchs, osteichthytes, invertebrates, and plants. The spectacular dinosaur skulls that were on display at our Salt Lake City meeting were collected from the Kaiparowits Plateau Region, including *Kosmoceratops*, *Utahceratops*, *Diabloceratops*, *Nasutoceratops*, *Teratophoneus*, and *Lythronax*.

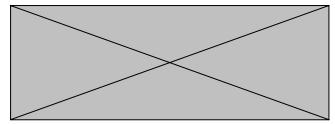
- The Escalante Desert Region of the Monument contains mostly Jurassic rocks, including important trackways and important Morrison Fm. paleobotanical and dinosaurian sites.
- The Circle Cliffs Region at the northeastern end of the Monument contains Permian and Triassic rocks, which have yielded scientifically important fossils including the largest Triassic age petrified forest outside of Petrified Forest National Monument.

Thank you for speaking up to keep America's fossils safe for everyone by protecting the boundaries of these two paleontologically important National Monuments.

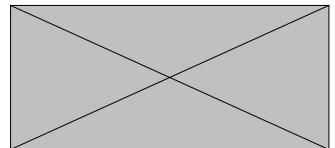
Sincerely yours,



P. David Polly
President, SVP



Emily J. Rayfield
Vice President, SVP



John A. Long
Past President, SVP

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